



# NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COALITION

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March 6, 2013

John Kline, Chair  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Virginia Foxx  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1230 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Representative Foxx:

On behalf of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) and its national membership network, I am writing in regard to the *Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act (H.R. 803)*, also known as the *SKILLS Act*. We believe that the proposed consolidation of WIA Youth Activities formula funds into the adult-focused Workforce Investment Fund as proposed in H.R. 803 will have detrimental effects on disconnected youth and young adults across the nation.

In order to address this concern, NYEC recommends that Title I WIA Youth Activities be maintained as a separate funding stream independent of other programs. Such an approach would allow for a continued focus on locally-designed and delivered career preparation, training and employment for economically disadvantaged youth, and also help to ensure local flexibility and program effectiveness.

While local areas could continue to serve youth age 16 and above through the Workforce Investment Fund, H.R. 803 appears to focus this fund on services currently offered through the One-Stop system, rather than on the youth-focused services authorized by WIA that help off-track students and out-of-school youth prepare themselves for active and productive citizenship. Specifically, WIA youth program elements authorized in Section 129 must include a variety of secondary school completion strategies, alternative education as appropriate, summer employment, occupational training as appropriate, leadership development, supportive services, adult mentoring, follow-up services and comprehensive guidance and counseling. These research-based youth development program components are quite different from activities delivered through local one-stop centers, which, appropriately, focus overwhelmingly on the employment needs of adults.

Furthermore, the demand for services from unemployed and dislocated adults and the performance measures associated with the Workforce Investment Fund would encourage local communities to focus these resources on adults who are unemployed and under-employed. Thus, in many communities the Workforce Investment Fund would inevitably be dedicated to the needs of adults rather than those of youth.

At a time when youth employment is at its lowest level in 60 years, the need to strengthen and expand federal youth delivery systems that provide employment options, education and comprehensive supports to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has never been greater. The proposed consolidation of WIA Youth Activities into an adult-focused Workforce Investment Fund represents a significant loss to the program integrity of youth-focused services.

Given the economic realities facing our nation, we recognize that some streamlining of federal workforce programs should be under consideration. However, given the particular needs of low income youth with barriers to employment, we believe that federal legislation should ensure programming at an effective scale and appropriate delivery model, which can be achieved through a separate funding stream.

We appreciate your efforts to move forward with the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act and hope that you consider the 6.7 million youth ages 16-24 that are estimated to be out of school and out of work. WIA

Reauthorization offers an opportunity to address the needs of these youth and young adults who comprise the emerging workforce of our nation.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective and concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me for assistance or questions at (202) 659-1064.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mala B. Thakur".

Mala B. Thakur  
Executive Director  
National Youth Employment Coalition

cc: US House of Representatives, Education and Workforce Committee